The Educational Scorecard: The Start of our Journey

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Abstract: Against a backdrop of public sector cuts, increasing university fees and high youth unemployment, we are facing challenges in Higher Education to demonstrate the value of our courses. Assessing the value of learning, however, is not straight forward. This paper reports on a study of evaluation processes on a post-graduate, professionally accredited diploma delivered at a selection of post 1992 universities. The driver for the study was a concern that current evaluation processes do not fully demonstrate the value of the course nor take into account the needs of multiple stakeholders. The project included benchmarking University evaluation processes and conducting a dialogue with stakeholders. The study adopted a qualitative management research approach, involving: a review of current practice, comparison with a sample of equivalent courses, and consultation (in the form of focus groups and semi-structured interviews) with a sample of students and employers. The paper discusses findings and proposes recommendations for future evaluation procedures in the design of an 'educational scorecard' for the course. Kaplan and Norton's 'balanced scorecard (1996) concept was adapted to provide a mechanism to represent and balance the needs of different stakeholder groups in the education process. We argue that we cannot truly assess accountability and comparability without engaging a range of stakeholders, not only in soliciting their views on the outcome of the learning but also in the design and implementation of evaluation processes. The 'educational scorecard' presented in this paper is developed specifically for the post-graduate diploma in Human Resource Management (PDHRM) at Leeds Metropolitan University and the report concludes with some initial reflections on the benefits of adopting the scorecard methodology The proposed model is flexible and may be adapted for other HE institutions and courses.

Keywords: evaluation, HRD, higher education, stakeholders, balanced scorecard

1. Introduction

The plethora of research available suggests extensive critique of evaluation of learning in academic settings. Loveland (cited in Haan, 2010) claimed there have been over 2,000 studies in student evaluations of teaching during the past seventy years. Therefore it is inappropriate to suggest a failure of activity. The challenge remains, however, about what, how and when we seek to evaluate. The Course Leadership team for the Post-Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management (PDHRM) at Leeds Metropolitan University had some concerns about whether the existing evaluation procedures were adding value and fit for purpose. As teachers of HR we examine levels of evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1998), purposes of evaluation (Easterby-Smith, 1994), return on investment (Phillips and Phillips, 2001) and return on expectation (Anderson (2007) . We assert the importance of and inherent challenges in the evaluation to the learning and development effort. As advocates of this approach however we often fail to demonstrate appropriate practice, at the end of the module we hand out the 'happy sheet' (a module evaluation form) focused on teaching rather than learning and assessing satisfaction rather than achievement. The aim of the project reported in this paper was to investigate current evaluation procedures on the PDHRM and consider to what extent they meet the requirements of different stakeholder groups.

It is clear that today's universities have a wide range of stakeholders all with complex needs. In attempts to create a framework for measuring delivery against stakeholder requirements, researchers (e.g. Karathanos & Karathanos (2005); Beard (2009)), have sought to draw upon the work of Kaplan and Norton (1996) on the 'balanced scorecard' and attempted to create a framework that will measure performance of an academic institution. All of these writers have tended to accept the Kaplan and Norton (2006) 4 box framework. Barnth et al (2011) however, sought to create a sector appropriate model albeit driven by a financial management perspective, and specified 'research', 'teaching' and 'service' as the three perspectives for measurement. This paper seeks to establish whether there is an appropriate 'educational scorecard' for the post-graduate HRM course through an evaluation of the needs of varying stakeholder groups.

A key challenge for evaluation of a part-time post-graduate, professionally accredited, course is the scope and complexity of stakeholders. Sarrico et al (2010) found that the existence of multiple

stakeholders was often ignored in HE evaluation. It could be argued that we cannot truly assess accountability and comparability without engaging a range of stakeholders in the design and participation of evaluation procedures. Many evaluation procedures focus solely on student feedback but this means that the data collected are not triangulated with that of other sources. Sproule (cited in Nygaard and Belluigi, 2011) goes so far as to argue that the exclusive use of student feedback to evaluate teaching and/or courses is an 'anathema to the academic mission'.

The current climate for Higher Education presents a challenging time for Universities. The economic conditions coupled with Government policies to reduce public-sector funding but seemingly increase regulation, present both a squeeze on student numbers and a more competitive market place. Chris Woodhead, former chief inspector of schools, claims vice chancellors have 'turned a blind eye to these issues of quality' and suggests higher tuition fees will encourage students to demand a better service (Answer the Question, 2012) This exerts pressure on universities and ultimately course leaders and lecturers, who come under greater scrutiny to demonstrate added value at an acceptable cost, and to respond in a constructive and timely manner to student demands. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) suggest it is particularly critical in the current economic climate to ensure a good return on investment for learning initiatives as many companies will have increased focus on costs (CIPD, 2011). The majority of students on the course under investigation are part-time, professional students, and therefore we face similar pressure to demonstrate the value of investment in the course to both students and employers.

This paper unfolds as follows: first we cover a brief review of issues concerning evaluation procedures in HE, then the research approach for the study is explained, the findings are then explored for each respondent group under three key themes, a proposal for an 'educational scorecard' is presented, and finally we conclude with some initial suggested benefits of the scorecard approach and some suggestions for future research.

2. Evaluation procedures in HE

The CIPD annual Learning and Talent Development survey (2011) found post-course evaluations or 'happy sheets' to be the most commonly used method of learning evaluation (93% of relevant organisations) this is also the approach found in academic institutions. This approach in education is a standardized form generally focused on students' perceptions of teaching rather than their actual learning. It may provide useful feedback on the teaching experience but if the aim is to improve attainment of learning outcomes, the focus should be factors that facilitate student learning (Denson et al, 2010). Similarly Nygaard and Belluigi et al (2011) suggests that when evaluation is based on de- contextualised learning, it ignores the learning processes of students, providing information on perceptions ultimately like a popularity test. This is supported by research by Frick et al (2010) who claim course evaluations traditionally used in higher education have few items that are empirically related to learning achievement.

Powney and Hall (1998) argue that student satisfaction questionnaires are counter-productive, partly because they are underpinned by an unproven assumption that satisfied students get better results. Concerns have also been raised by numerous researchers about what influences the results (see for example, Francis (2011) who cites studies showing students' attitudes to a course before the start of the semester, prior interest and field of study all have an impact on ratings.) The impact that such monitoring initiatives have in actually improving the quality of teaching has also been questioned. Denson et al (2011) cite a study that found only 3–10% of instructors reported making major changes in their teaching as a result of course evaluations. However, some researchers do claim a positive relationship between course grades and student ratings of course satisfaction. Svanum and Aigner (2011) suggest this relationship is well established but not straight forward so that controversy remains about the interpretation and magnitude of this association, together with its implications. Additionally, Frick et al (2010) report on meta-analyses of studies that have examined the correlation of the relationship between items such as ''This was an outstanding course'' and student achievement, finding a moderate correlation. Nevertheless, whilst not doubting the existence of the relationship, Frick et al (2010) stress that it does not indicate how to improve teaching. As a whole these results imply that the reliability and validity of measurement tools require further examination. Similarly, the extent to which evaluation takes account of the strategic direction of the Business School, the factors that influence student attainment and the requirements of those paying the fees needs exploring.

Concerns about the prominence of student satisfaction measures relate to the 'what' of evaluation procedures in higher education, but criticisms have also been directed at the 'when' or timing of evaluation, and the 'how' evaluation studies are conducted. Firstly addressing the timing issues, formal procedures are often at the end of a module or course. Whilst there may be a clear rationale for such summative evaluation, the multiple purposes of evaluation, such as, learning (Easterby-Smith, 1994) may not be facilitated in this way. Nygaard and Belluigi (2011) suggest effective practice would involve conducting data collection from students at a time when reflection could positively impact or facilitate their learning. This supports views of a more strategic approach that incorporates evaluation throughout the learning cycle rather than solely at the end. Secondly, the standardized nature of processes utilized by many institutions may not reflect the diversity of subjects, students, stakeholders and learning outcomes of different disciplines. Construction of a tailored, course specific approach may yield more meaningful results. We suggest the 'educational scorecard' may provide the framework in which this could be developed.

3. Research methodology

An exploratory approach was adopted based on inductive reasoning. The researchers had a good appreciation of the breadth of issues from the literature review and their own experience. The subsequent primary research was aimed at engaging stakeholders in issues relating to the design of evaluation procedures. There were two key stages in the data collection. First; a benchmarking exercise which sought to review current evaluation practices in a number of comparable courses and meet three key objectives;

- draw on best practice from other institutions,
- share creative ideas and
- learn from their success

The second stage sought views of two stakeholder groups: students and employers to identify their requirements. Clearly, there are other stakeholder groups, such as the university quality department, government funders and the professional body; for the purpose of this study their requirements were represented by the formal regulatory and validation processes.

For both data collection exercises a non-probability sampling method was used. This relied on convenience or opportunity sampling, drawing on a sample of the researchers' contacts. The purpose of the research was explained to participants and they were given the choice to be named in the report or remain anonymous. Data collection took place by telephone interviews, focus groups and questionnaires depending on the respondent group. To enable consistency for analysis, a structured questionnaire or feedback sheet was used for each group, covering the same key issues, informed by the literature review. In summary the respondents were:

- 5 course leaders from Post 1992 universities offering a similar professionally accredited postgraduate courses in the same discipline
- 14 students on such a course at Leeds Metropolitan University
- 4 employers who currently or had previously sponsored students on such courses

As an initial exploratory exercise, the research was intended to focus on the priorities above, which were often missing from existing research. The scope of this study did not allow a more comprehensive or representative sample to be surveyed. The researchers acknowledged this limitation but felt the nature of the investigation was such that any views from the defined population were equally valid to contribute to the existing body of knowledge. This limitation does mean that any findings will be tentative and may require more rigorous testing through a deductive approach before implementation. However as our findings suggest an adaptable model for specific institutions and courses, this may not be essential.

4. Findings

The findings provide an insight into the views of university and stakeholder group participants. They are specific to the university and course context under investigation and are not taken to be representative of the whole population as per the inductive approach described above. The research focussed around three key themes:

- Evaluation procedures undertaken

- The purpose of such evaluation procedures
- The involvement of different stakeholders in the process

These were subsequently analysed to give a composite view of evaluation of the course being investigated and so inform the design of our 'educational scorecard'.

4.1 Evaluation procedures

Survey outcomes from each of the three groups of respondents (benchmark universities, students and employers) are addressed in turn below.

4.1.1 Benchmarked universities - the course leader perspective

Unsurprisingly, many universities surveyed undertook very similar processes but referred to them by different names. These can be categorised as:

- course surveys,
- meetings with students / student representatives,
- evaluation integrated into course content

Each of these categories will be examined in turn:

*Course surveys:*Responses from all of the institutions mention university or faculty developed approaches to surveying students. With regards course level surveys, for two institutions the surveys were centrally developed with little opportunity to influence content. The third took part in the HEA Post Graduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) characterised by the respondent as "the post-graduate equivalent of the National Student Survey". As with the institutional surveys the questions were generic but information could be broken down to course level. The reliability and validity of the surveys was unknown but still proved helpful, as one respondent said "*The processes can provide a useful insight into issues that are important to students but it is difficult to assess how representative they are. It is also heavily focussed on how students feel rather than other potential measures ".*

Meetings with students / student representatives:

Four of the 5 universities conducted meetings with entire course cohorts - in some cases as a supplement to the representative support that was also available. It was suggested by one participant that this does not always work, one university with a post graduate forum rated it as neutral as "*only a few from the course partake in it".*

Three of the 5 respondents outlined evaluation processes where students' opinions were represented by their peers (elective representatives) at formal meetings. One institution with a twice-yearly 'board of studies' approach suggested that the process was good but "*depends upon who is chairing the board and the trail of actions".* The second had annual 'Enhancement and Development Meetings'. *A* third institution held twice-yearly 'staff/student liaison committees' because those on the course responsible for the employment relations agenda "*want them to learn about working with representatives and the consultative committee approach"* this was not however a formal assessed component of course content, elements of which are addressed in the next section.

Before moving on, it is interesting to note that two of the three institutions that mentioned student representatives identified the outcomes of staff/student meetings and follow up on actions thereon, as key to their success.

Evaluation integrated into course content:

One university identified how they had integrated an evaluation process into their course content. The first institution required students to run an end of course forum attended by employers and teaching staff as part of an assessed skills development activity. The one-day forum began with a half day exploring how students had developed over the programme, this element was assessed and was attended by employers. The second half of the day required students to participate in a whole course evaluation event lead by the course leader and module team. Commenting on the latter evaluative

component the Course Leader said *"This is a way to have feedback across modules to see what is working as a coherent whole".*

4.1.2 The student perspective

In a review of existing procedures, students were generally aware of both informal and formal methods of evaluation and recognized the importance of evaluation procedures for course development. Although one student commented '*There is no point in conducting an evaluation if the college is not going to do anything with the information provided. I think a good Learner Evaluation form tells the students how the information will be used and when and where the findings will be published.'*

The range of evaluation procedures cited included: module evaluations, online discussion forums, verbal/email feedback, assignment/exam results, university league tables, student surveys, engagement in lectures and pass rates. One student with disabilities suggested measures of diversity and how we deal with students with disabilities or special requirements should be incorporated into evaluation procedures. Some concerns were expressed regarding the completion of in class evaluations in the presence of the tutor. One student suggested that despite a broad range of procedures existing, there may be a lack of triangulation in analysis of the information.

The value of learning was described by students in terms of transfer of learning to the work context, either in their day to day roles or in terms of career progression and development. However, there were mixed views about the University's role in the transfer process and whether this was the university's responsibility or that of the students themselves. For example, some students are in low level jobs and felt they did not have an opportunity to transfer learning at the moment but would hope to do so as they progressed in their career. They suggested this could be assessed through a longitudinal evaluation (12 months and 3 years later), looking at career progression after completion of the course and surveying their organizations/sponsors. Diverse opinions were also expressed regarding the challenges of measuring return on expectation. It was acknowledged that the potential multiplicity of expectations could be problematic, particularly in a course governed by professional body requirements and university constraints.

4.1.3 The employer perspective

The first noteworthy finding is that of the 4 employers surveyed, there was very little employer evaluation of the courses on which they were sending students. There appeared to be greater confidence that the universities' quality assurance processes were satisfactory and fit for purpose. However, this meant that opportunities to evaluate transfer of learning were potentially missed.

The response to what employers might look for in a postgraduate, professionally accredited, course provided wide-ranging answers including: cost, location, time and flexibility.

4.2 Purposes of evaluation procedures

5.1.1 Benchmarked universities

All respondents were asked to identify the purposes to which they put the outcome of their evaluation exercises. The most frequently mentioned outcomes were:

- To provide information to enhance the course
- To measure student satisfaction
- A formal requirement of the Quality process
- To provide feedback on methods of delivery
- To measure if expectations have been met

Other purposes identified in the evaluation literature, such as comparing staff and courses (for staff, current and future students), measuring success rates, learning achievement, learning transfer and to provide information for staff feedback, appraisals, evaluation of teaching and teaching research; were considered areas outside of the concern of a course leader. Respondents were however concerned to say that these factors did however have a role to play for other stakeholders in the institution.

Despite these similarities, there are different attitudes amongst the course leaders to these processes. For a number it is box ticking, NSS and regulator driven compliance from the centre which led to local concern about the richness and timeliness of standardized processes. "*We can't do the course level one now as we're not supposed to overload them with questionnaires. So we've lost some of the richness of data*". For others it is about having a very positive faculty attitude to quality and having the centre involved in a supportive rather than an adversarial capacity.

That is not to say that courses have had to simply labour under university, regulator or indeed professional body systems. There was some evidence that courses had supplemented the University procedures with customized processes that enhanced the quality and depth of feedback received. There are novel approaches which are mentioned below. It seems then that the issue is where courses try and replicate university systems so that students experience 'déjà-vu'. Where novel approaches to evaluation have been identified, it seems that there is no reluctance from university stakeholders to let them take place. Whether it is because they do not mind or do not know about them is a question that remains unanswered.

Feedback had led to developments on a number of the courses, but not usually as a consequence of the rather blunt university wide surveys. It is difficult to measure the extent of change that had taken place as a result of evaluation procedures. This is because all of these accredited courses had undertaken a professional body-driven review within the last year which has resulted in extensive course revisions.

4.2.1 The student perspective

Students proposed a number of concurrent purposes of the course evaluation. The most highly rated purposes were:

- To measure if learning objectives have been achieved
- To measure if expectations have been met
- To measure student satisfaction
- To provide feedback to staff

4.2.2 The employer perspective

When asked what universities should be aiming for from their evaluation procedures respondents all agreed that feedback to staff and achieving learning objectives were the primary reasons for course evaluation. Also featuring strongly were:

- links to teaching staff appraisal/reward
- measures of student satisfaction
- feedback on methods of delivery
- course comparison data
- provision of information to enable appropriate course selection
- meeting of professional body standards

This is interesting when compared with employers' decision making on course choice. It seems that practicalities are at the forefront with cost and location mentioned more than once and success outcomes 'pass rates' only mentioned on a single occasion. Other aspects of learning that were mentioned were delivery methods and content coverage. It could be suggested both of these were also practical considerations. The former around release from work issues, the latter around coverage of current work issues within a course to reduce the costs of further external training.

In contrast to the suggested aims for university evaluations the in-company assessment of learning was often without formal structure/measurement. Reference was made to: Student feedback, Performance and development review (PDR) discussions, line manager meetings and *'it's important candidates have the right qualification for their role'*. It is clear then that there is little formal course evaluation, more that feedback is derived from spontaneous complaints/praise and employee performance management discussions where progress towards the desired academic outcomes were checked rather than the quality of the learning experience.

The results imply a trust in universities and their evaluation processes to validate the training on which employers choose to send their staff. This trust may also extend to the professional body accreditation of the university award. Employers appeared confident that if the course met these quality standards it would be fit for purpose and deliver intended workplace outcomes. Aspects such as teaching and student learning, typically of 'pedagogic concern' are recognised as important for the University to evaluate, however, back in the workplace the findings indicate a more pragmatic approach, where the more 'business concerns' of financial information and becoming 'qualified' were prevalent.

It should be noted that employer respondents were sourced via a professional body networking event. It is therefore likely that such sponsors strongly identified with the professional accreditation of the university awards and in many cases would have undertaken a similarly accredited award themselves.

4.3 Involvement of different stakeholders

4.3.1 Benchmarked universities

Perhaps surprisingly, for vocational, professionally accredited courses, engagement with employers on a regular basis was very limited. One institution used a 'research network' of industry specific practitioners as guest speakers, a second engaged through 'placements' both of which arguably, are not about direct course evaluation. A third said employer involvement was every 5 years at periodic review. Of the final two, one is hoping to achieve employer engagement through the new forum, the other said that this level of engagement happened at a business school level not at the course level.

Two institutions also mentioned the professional body and external examiners as stakeholders of the process. It seems that the nature of the relationship, focused on development as well as compliance, was key to securing a positive approach to the evaluation process and its outcomes.

4.3.2 The student perspective

The respondents perceived students, teaching staff and employers as stakeholders but did not suggest any other stakeholder groups. Students were seen as the primary 'customer'. The role of employers was less clear, they were seen as sponsors, additional customers or even irrelevant to the university as the employer/student relationship was separate to the student/university relationship. One student commented '*many employers just pay for the course as part of their commitment to Learning and Development and really their expectations in terms of learning outcomes and results are not as high as those of the students'.* This separateness was echoed in the relationship between student and parents (or other family sponsors).

4.3.3 The employer perspective

All respondents, except one agreed that students, employers and teaching staff should be involved, one respondent also suggested line managers as distinct from a training or HR department. The way universities should collect feedback varied only slightly with most suggesting questionnaires and surveys and some suggesting focus groups. There was a strong view from employers that they should be engaged in evaluation at the end of the course and up to a year after a student has graduated, echoing the student perspective in 3.1.2 above. Many suggestions relating to students and teaching staff reflect common practice across the universities surveyed for this research. (As cited in section 3.1.1)

All respondents agreed that students were the primary customer, two noted the employer and one cited parents. Parents could be extended to refer to all family members who have a stake in the student's investment in time and energy and their ultimate academic success.

5. The way forward

The findings supported the general tenet of the importance of evaluation in HRD literature, with all participants recognising the requirement for, and value of, course wide evaluations. The benchmarking data demonstrated ways that formal university procedures, which risk losing "some of the richness of data", could be supplemented by specific course level procedures to provide greater depth of information. Where these were integrated with teaching on the course, they also overcame the problem of low response rates and limited student engagement with the process.

The range of evaluation methods cited by both students and course leaders suggests that lots of information is collected in both formal and informal ways. However, the extent to which data is utilized in a coordinated manner could be improved. Students appeared to assume a more integrated approach than actually occurred. In practice, the results of different evaluation techniques were not combined into a meaningful whole, leading to a piecemeal rather than strategic view of evaluation. This leads to a reactive approach where small changes are made based on how students feel rather than improvements linked to higher attainment, echoing the concerns of Denson et al (2010) above.

Recommendations from students, one priority area, who took part in the research, supported the development of more flexible data collection, such as online discussion forums to enable them to provide timely feedback at any stage of the course and respond to comments made by other students. However, this may lead to the creation of unrealistic expectations around immediate change. Additionally if students are unaware of university procedures and compliance requirements, another priority area, it could mean they feel their desires for immediate and significant change are being ignored rather than pursed through rather lengthy processes and channels. Also as reported in 3.1.1 not all students participate in such processes, which could make data collected invalid due to limited quantity or skewed by those students with the most to say.

It was generally supported by all respondents that evaluation should have a student centered focus. This would identify the levels of student satisfaction, if learning objectives have been achieved and whether expectations have been met. However the learning objectives may be understood differently by each stakeholder e.g. the student, employer or professional body. The complexity of different audiences, even within the same stakeholder group, means views may differ. Embracing this diversity through involving different stakeholders in the evaluation process design and implementation may lead to a more meaningful collection of data. Better dialogue between stakeholders at the ex-ante, interim and ex-post (Devins and Smith (2010)) stages, may help. It should be noted that collection of evaluation data is not the end of the evaluation process. The importance of action planning is essential to lead to continuous learning and improvement, by all stakeholders. Practical consideration needs to be made as to how all relevant stakeholders' views can be captured to provide manageable data for courses and universities to analyse and implement improvements.

Our conclusion is that the course evaluation for the course investigated, should include the following:

- A strategic focus (linked to professional body and university strategy)
- Clearly stated and communicated purpose and outcomes
- Integration into the course as a whole not just completed at the end
- Inclusion of appropriate stakeholders
- Engagement of students, in order to provide greater depth of information, through customized course level procedures that enhance rather than duplicate the standardised university approaches
- Triangulation of data from different methods to ensure a more balanced basis for decision making
- Where possible, benchmarking against internal and external data

As mentioned previously in section 1, researchers have utilized the Balanced Scorecard as a framework for academic institutions. The studies generally report on the application of the scorecard at organizational level. Our proposal is that a scorecard tailored to the specific requirements of the course would enable us to address the features listed above.. In order to achieve this we recommend the development of a course specific 'Educational Scorecard'. The balanced scorecard provides a framework against which long term performance can be evaluated. It identified 4 perspectives; 'financial', 'customers' 'internal business' and 'learning and growth' (Kaplan and Norton 1996). When applying the scorecard, individual Key Performance Indicators are captured under one of the four headings and these are measured and managed regularly, sometimes as part of a management dashboard. Translating this into a university environment is not simple. Currently, as reported above there is a lack of an integrated approach between relevant stakeholders but if universities are to survive in the increasingly competitive marketplace where the views of such stakeholders are arguably critical, then accurate measurement and timely responses may be the key to gaining high student satisfaction scores and other success measures.

Below you will find our proposed Educational Scorecard for the course investigated for this paper. As with Kaplan and Norton (1996) there are 4 areas which map the priority areas for course evaluation and management. Each perspective contains some examples of content but the lists are not exhaustive.

The Educational Scorecard contributes to the solution.

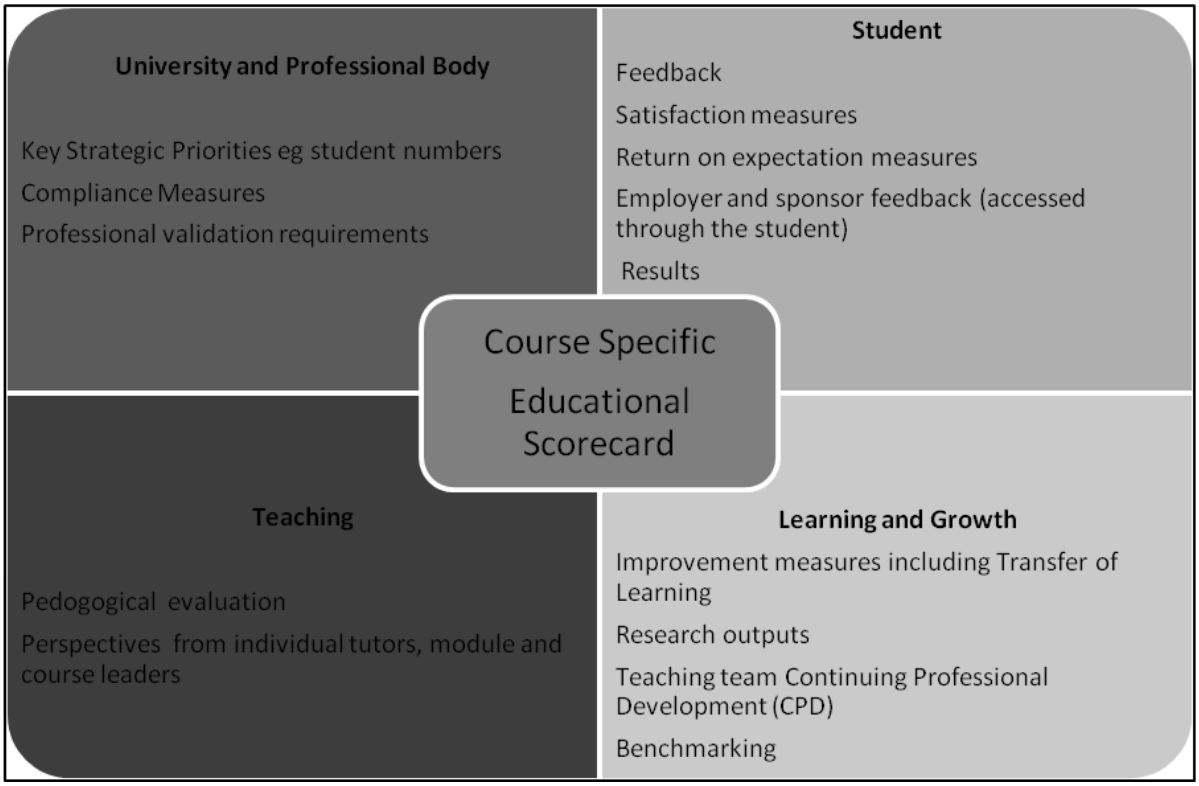

Figure 1: The educational scorecard

Derivation of the Model from our Research

An analysis of the literature and our primary research shows information is gathered from qualitative and quantitative sources and for different purposes. Although student-centred-ness is a key driver for much of what is done and justifiably so, our collective evidence shows that may other factors contribute to a rounded, multi-dimensional evaluation. This will ultimately be of greater value and impact. The four quadrants of our Educational Scorecard summarise the areas we identify as key to this holistic approach. The upper quadrants are derived from data extracted from or needed by the key stakeholders; regulatory bodies such as the university and professional body and students. The lower quadrants represent the key purposes of evaluation in this context; to improve teaching and extend learning and growth. Our model seeks to capture the diverse and wide-ranging sources of data for evaluation identified earlier in our research. This analysis can be tested working in reverse and mapping each quadrant against the evidence here presented. It is evident that all quadrants of the model are discussed almost in equal measure in our findings. Therefore this is presented as a balanced Educational Scorecard. However in its application, we caution that it might identify specific courses where one quadrant is currently weighted (used) more in decision-making than the others. In which case, evaluation of the data collected should be interpreted and if necessary more data collected against the other quadrants to capture a more rounded picture from which to implement more informed decisions.

6. Application and significance to a wider audience

The basis of our study stemmed from a course leadership team inundated with evaluation procedures and sources of feedback, but concerned about the fragmentation, validity and reliability of this information. Consequently, we were questioning our ability to make effective and strategic improvements to the course based on information that was piecemeal and perhaps unrepresentative of the views of all of our stakeholders. The educational scorecard has given us a more balanced view!

We are still at an early stage of implementation but would claim the following initial gains:

- It gives a clearer perspective to the formal University and professional body evaluation procedures.
- It has made us integrate evaluation rather than complete it predominantly at the end. We begin discussing student expectations at the interview stage and again at induction so that we have jointly agreed expectations that we can review throughout the course.
- It has enabled us to identify areas where we need to obtain more input from stakeholders, for example, employer and sponsor feedback.
- Pedagogic evaluation has led us to develop an induction framework for associate lecturers.
- It helps us demonstrate our success. The articulation of our research outputs and development activities establishes credibility for the teaching team, hopefully leading to greater trust and student engagement.
- It establishes a framework for comparative analysis of the course over time.

This study has focused upon one course in one university, drawing on data from some of the relevant stakeholders and comparable courses in other universities. Its findings were not meant to be automatically applied more widely to different courses in other institutions. However, the Educational Scorecard is designed to be adaptable, with scope to vary the titles and content of each quadrant and we would therefore argue that it has a much broader relevance than just this course. In the current environment of increased scrutiny of university performance and the publication of league tables it is imperative that course leaders have appropriate management information to demonstrate success and drive improvements. The significance of league tables has been questioned as they combine a broad range of measures which potentially conceals specific areas of strength or weakness. The lack of universally agreed criteria also leads to variance in results; there is an inconsistency between different UK lists and also a disparity with global rankings. We would contend that a meaningful collection of data at course level is a more appropriate means of strategic performance monitoring. By modifying the measures in each quadrant to reflect the priorities of the particular course, university and professional body, the methodology of the educational scorecard could be applied to a wide range of different courses.

7. Further research

Future adopters of the Educational scorecard will need to assess its applicability beyond the Master's level course considered herein, initially by replicating its usage in similar degrees at other institutions. Following, there is a need to understand its ability to provide appropriate measurement across different subject areas, and also at different levels of university study - for example at undergraduate level. Adoption at undergraduate study would necessitate the consideration of other appropriate agendas and stakeholders. The researchers here suggest that employability could become a factor that is addressed as an alternative to direct employer/sponsor input. This however needs further evaluation.

It may also be that a similar approach to the one outlined on this paper could be adopted within secondary education but without further investigation at this stage it is inappropriate to make such an assertion.

Above all there needs to be longer term research to establish the longevity and impact of activities and proposals such as this one. Does it offer a sustained qualitative difference in evaluation and outcomes or is it a novel approach which becomes increasingly sidelined as yet another evaluation activity?

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